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SUBJECT: GOF ON KAZAKHSTAN'S OSCE 2009 CHAIRMANSHIP BID

REF: STATE 139361

Classified By: CDA JOSIAH ROSENBLATT FOR REASONS 1.5 (b) and (d)~

¶1. (C) A/Political Counselor delivered reftel demarche August 25 to MFA DAS Equivalent for Russia, the Caucasus, and Central Asia, Aurelia Bouchez, who was eager to discuss the U.S. position on Kazakhstan's candidacy for the 2009 OSCE Chairmanship. Drawing on reftel points, A/Polcouns highlighted Kazakhstan's disappointing lack of action on the steps the U.S. had recommended to meet the democratic standards required of chairmanship, our attempts to persuade Kazakhstan to delay its candidacy until at least 2011, and our hope that other like-minded OSCE member states would discreetly attempt to steer Kazakhstan in the same direction.

¶2. (C) Bouchez said that France had no fixed position on the issue, but would be discussing it with European partners in the coming days. A common position in the EU would be ideal, but the German position had already complicated such efforts. She said the GOF wanted to avoid sending a negative message to the Kazakhstani government as the UK had done, but at the same time agreed that more progress was required, especially in light of recent events. On substance, France shared completely the U.S. judgment that exercising the chairmanship required a minimum of credibility. The U.S. proposal to Kazakhstan to delay its candidacy until at least 2011 was welcome, she added, so long as the Americans presented it in terms of a possibility and not a guarantee. We affirmed that this was the case. She hoped that OSCE member states would not close the door on chairmanship, and offer a constructive response.

¶3. (C) For the moment, Bouchez noted, the GOF had not been approached by Kazakhstan on the issue and would avoid discussing it. President Chirac met with President Nazarbayev on the margins of the G-8 in St. Petersburg but neither raised the issue; other high-level contacts were not on the schedule. Bouchez commented that President Chirac had a particularly good relationship with Nazarbayev, and that France's final decision on the issue would likely lie in the Presidency.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: France highly values its important commercial relationship with Kazakhstan; something to which President Chirac is particularly sensitive. We would expect France to take neither a leading role in opposing the Kazakhstani bid, nor in pushing for a positive response. The GOF sees Kazakhstan moving in the wrong direction democratically, but

is reluctant to make this a central issue in their bilateral relationship. It is worth noting that President Chirac was one of the first leaders in the world to congratulate Nazarbayev after his landslide (read: flawed) re-election; he did this in spite of strong advice to the contrary from the MFA. END COMMENT

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Rosenblatt